

## Epiphany 3 Mark 1:14-20

Today four ordinary men have an encounter with Jesus. A few weeks ago we looked at the calling of John the Baptist to sinners. He called them to repent and be baptised until eventually Jesus himself came and was baptised and everything changed. John recognised who it was he had been preaching for – he saw the messiah. In today's gospel lesson, we have another encounter with Jesus this time by his first disciples. Jesus is beginning his public ministry, and he came into Galilee and passing along by the Sea of Galilee he called these fishermen to become fisher of men.

Notice the technique Jesus used. The text says, "he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of people." And immediately they left their nets and followed him."

Can you feel the urgency, the immediacy, the conviction, of these men?

When Jesus called these fishermen the story could have had a vastly different course. They could have scratched their heads and discussed the pros and cons with each other, their families and neighbours.

They could have told Jesus, "Well let us think about it for a while, maybe something even better will come along. Maybe a big school of fish will come and we will not be able to leave, maybe our wives won't let us, maybe our friends will make fun of us for leaving our jobs, our home and our families to follow a guy who will travel around the country side preaching that the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel"

But when Jesus called these fishermen there was none of the above, they didn't question his call, they didn't think about it, they didn't consult their families, they didn't see if anything better would come along, they followed him. There was something special, something different about such an encounter with Jesus that one doesn't get with an encounter with anyone else.

But although we do not have the physical Jesus here to call us, when Jesus through his Holy Spirit encounters us today to follow him and let him be the Lord of our lives our response should be the same, he doesn't want us to think about it, to weigh it, to study the pros and cons, to talk to our family and friends, to wait and see if something better will come along, or the situation in which we find ourselves will improve.

When Jesus calls us there is a sense of urgency, there is a sense that Jesus is erupting into our lives with such a strong force that we have no choice but to decide now, not tomorrow or the next day, but now, now while he encounters us; while his presence is with us, while we have him besides us to encourage us in our decision.

There were a group of people standing outside a very large and ornate cathedral in Europe and they were admiring the very fine craftsmanship, the detail work, the care and the love that seemed evident in building such a fine place to worship a loving God. One of the people turned to another in the group and said, "Why can't we build so today? Why can't we build with such pride, such craftsmanship today, and the other person replied, "They had convictions; we have opinions."

Is that true? Are the convictions, the integrity the early Christian had for their God missing

today? A lot of people have the opinion that they believe in God only when or if it is convenient, or when there is nothing better to do, or when it is socially acceptable, or when they sense they need a favour from God, but there is no conviction to give ones all, one's whole self, one's whole life over to him. When Jesus encounters us, he doesn't want our opinions about him, he wants our conviction that he is the lord of all. We are the followers, we are God's children, and God is the provider.

When Jesus calls us, when he encounters us, he does so with a sense of urgency, with a sense of immediacy, with a sense of conviction, with a sense of commitment, with a sense that we will turn our entire lives over to him. Then notice what he said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people."

It's not clear that these men really knew what they were being called to do when told they would become fishers of people, but they knew they would be doing something. Not only does Jesus call us to a life of urgency and conviction, but he calls us to a task, he calls us to a job, he calls us to do something with what he has given us. He calls us to share; he calls us to give to others what he has first given to us, his love, his caring, and his forgiveness.

There is an old Korean legend that goes like this. A devout and generous man died and before he allowed St. Peter to usher him through the Pearly Gates he requested that he first take one small peek at hell. At the Gateway of hell, he was astounded to see long tables, food laden and sumptuous. In poured the multitudes gaunt ghastly, starved apparently into skeletons. Fastened to the forearm of each were yard-long forks and spoons. They frantically fought to feed themselves, in vain. It was living hell. Back in heaven he beheld tables similarly laden, but when the heavenly host came in, although to each arm was fastened a yard-long fork and spoon, they sat down and began to feed each other. The new resident knew it was heaven because of all that sharing."

Yes, a Christian is one who shares with another, who knows how to share because he or she has been sharing the gospel message while they lived their pilgrimage on this earth. Sharing is the call word, the sign that marks the life of a follower of Jesus. Sharing our faith, sharing our resources, sharing a part of ourselves with others is what this life is all about as we follow the master. Jesus calls us to a life of conviction, to a life of urgency, to a life of sharing, to a life of proclaiming his good news to others. But you might wonder, who do I share this story with, who is the one that I tell about Jesus? The answer is we share with anyone who will allow us to share with them. It's not just about the people we know or those like us, Jesus calls us to love the ones in this world that nobody else will love. Jesus calls us to reach out to the lonely, to the hungry, to the sick, to the ones in prison, to the disabled, to the forsaken, to the needy, to all those people who need to hear that someone indeed does love them and that someone is Jesus Christ.

Jesus came into Galilee preaching the good news that the kingdom of God was at hand. He asks us all to go into the world with that same message, the message of the good news of God and that his kingdom is now it is at hand. Jesus calls us to a life of conviction, to a life of urgency, to a life of reaching out with his message of love and forgiveness to all the people we encounter.